

TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION RECONSIDERED: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION, SEX WORK, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Kamala Kempadoo with Jyoti Sanghera and Bandana Pattanaik, Eds.
Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005

REVIEWED BY LEEANN TOWNSEND

Unfortunately, the terms “trafficking” and “prostitution” continue to be used haphazardly and interchangeably in discussions of the two subjects by researchers, activists, governments, policy makers, and in the media, for example, to the detriment of the diverse populations affected by these persistent issues. Through an examination of theoretical insights and empirical evidence based in Asia, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered* identifies and destabilizes the problematic ideology inherent in mainstream discourses and posits a “second generation thinking” of prostitution and trafficking. In this edited volume, Kamala Kempadoo has compiled an array of authors, including academics and activists, a textual coalition, encapsulating a vast range of research areas. Organized into three logical sections, the text commences with a discussion of the contentious definitions of trafficking, tracks the growth of feminist definitions throughout the 1990s, and argues for a redefinition of this concept in order to better serve the rights and lives of the poor and marginalized. The second section examines the ways in which knowledge of trafficking has been conflated with prostitution and illustrates the causal effects of such a limited analysis. The concluding articles offer practical examples of how some practitioners have alternatively fused theory and praxis in

their research on trafficking. The collection successfully foregrounds the necessity of a discursive practice that is committed to the needs, agency, and rights of all migrants.

Throughout the text, the contributors highlight the need for a reliable methodology that can be employed to conduct sound research on trafficking. Claims that are undocumented, unsubstantiated, conclusions that are not supported by rigorous empirical evidence and confusion over concepts lead to sensationalized reporting, biases, and inaccuracies in research. Facts are often constructed in this manner to spread propaganda as well as contribute to the dominant paradigm and discourse of trafficking. For instance, Lin Chew, Jyoti Sanghera, Jagori, and Ratna Kapur, all authors in this collection, note that there is no verifiable methodology, qualitative or quantitative, to ascertain realistic statistical information on trafficking. Instead of foregoing all research on trafficking then, Kempadoo fosters a discussion on this pertinent issue, makes readers aware of the problem, and provides us with the tools to think critically. Through this, Kempadoo is addressing (and, hopefully, invalidating) those researchers who have employed flawed methods and disseminated skewed data, notwithstanding the dangerous implications of such practices. Kempadoo also offers this discussion to caution new researchers joining the field and as a plea to readers to question available data on trafficking, prostitution, and migration. Even if just one reader grasps this message, albeit an important one, Kempadoo has provided a great service to this field.

Not only does Kempadoo encourage her readers to interrogate methodological issues, she also urges us to be aware of the mythology of trafficking. The lack of reliable data available on trafficking and the lack of conceptual clarity have both facilitated the perpetuation of these myths. In the absence of a firm body of knowledge, the mythology of trafficking can be used by myth makers

to promote their personal and/or political agendas. Myth makers use this “pseudoknowledge,” that is constructed knowledge, to support the discourse of their choosing, be it anti-trafficking or pro-rights movements. By detailing mythical scenarios involving a woman trafficked from Nepal to India in his article, John Frederick forces readers to confront their own unfounded perceptions of the trafficking issue. Frederick illustrates the negative consequences of these beliefs and effectively forces readers to question the ways in which they may themselves be guilty of perpetuating this myth. Similarly, Phil Marshall and Susu Thatun introduce readers to their “push down, pop up” concept to illustrate the faulty notion of prevention; thwarting migration in one area does not decrease the instances of trafficking. Marshall and Thatun argue against the commonly held belief that poverty and lack of education, for example, are the causes of trafficking. Instead, the authors maintain that it is the researcher’s own understanding of local situations and decision-making processes that is lacking. Moreover, Frederick as well as Marshall and Thatun, among others, provide both the novice researcher and the veteran with the knowledge to unpack the dominant ideologies and discourses involved in mainstream discussions of trafficking.

Another salient contribution to the literature on trafficking that Kempadoo’s edited volume imparts is the authors’ demands for the use of clearly defined terminology. All of the authors express the need to explicitly differentiate between trafficking, prostitution, and migration. When the terms are conflated, distinctions between victims and agents as well as consent and coercion become ambiguous, with serious consequences for those whom these terms affect. Sanghera discusses the ways in which trafficking and prostitution, trafficked persons and migrants, in addition to trafficked women and children, are all used synonymously.

Kapur notes that this confusion in terminology further complicates any attempts to gather statistical information. The paradigm that conflates prostitution and trafficking ignores all other migrants, including men, as Melissa Ditmore observes. When all prostitution is deemed to fall under the rubric of trafficking, the rights of migrant sex workers are denied. When trafficking and migration are used interchangeably, women are simultaneously constructed as criminals and victims. Through their examination of migration patterns in India, Jagori notes that this amalgamation of terms fails to recognize the effects of globalization on market demands and the need for some people to migrate for survival. Identifying traffickers is further compounded by this ambiguous terminology. Viewing all migration as trafficking has nullified women's, and men's, mobility rights. Notions of work, voluntary migration, and economics need to be incorporated into understandings of prostitution, trafficking, and migration.

The way in which trafficking is defined determines the interventions that are used. Researchers, activists, and policy makers alike must not enable the myth of trafficking or racist, sexist, and class biases to guide their actions. Ditmore notes that funding mediates grassroots activism, a factor that must be challenged. Pro-rights groups need to address the illegality and criminality that has been associated with migrants. Anti-trafficking supporters must not sacrifice the rights and needs of some people for their ideological purposes. The authors argue against the current trend towards global governance, state policing, the increase of exclusionary immigration policies, and strict border controls to combat trafficking. Sanghera discusses the hazardous potentials of current rescuing, rehabilitation, and repatriation missions and how they only serve political agendas. Chew illustrates the divisiveness inherent within feminist factions. Kapur notes

that the legal responses to trafficking have been shaped by the state's desire to safeguard the nation from the penetration of the "other". The law does not get to the root of the problem, but targets migrants and positions them in more precarious situations. Ho demonstrates the ways in which the cause of trafficking has led to increased state surveillance. These are all unrealistic solutions. The authors promote interventions that are contextualized socially, culturally, politically, geographically, historically, etc. Interventions need to focus on the human rights of all migrants.

Both Aftab Ahmed and Jan Boontin and offer alternative ways to conduct research on trafficking. Ahmed organized thematic group discussions in Bangladesh and employed flowcharts to discuss trafficking issues. Similarly, Boontin and employed feminist participatory action research, a method that employs the subjects of migration in conducting research, to limit the problems of data collection. I am not convinced that feminist participatory action research on trafficking is always feasible, let alone always advantageous to the subjects of analysis. However, a method that includes the interaction with the person or group being studied in its design is definitely a shift in the right direction.

Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered offers an essential counter discourse to mainstream discussions of trafficking and prostitution. This text should be read by anyone interested in this subject, especially anyone planning to do research in this area, including, but certainly not limited to, those grounding their research in Asia. The global implications of Kempadoo's work are invaluable!

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MADELEINE PARENT: ACTIVIST

Andree Lévesque, Ed. and trans.
Toronto: Sumach Press, 2005

REVIEWED BY SHERRILL CHEDA

The work and importance of Madeleine Parent, union organizer, feminist, and inspirational heroine of our time, is well portrayed in these ten different essays about this remarkable Quebec woman. The accompanying photos show this active, vital, brilliant woman at her work over the last 50 years, fighting for justice and freedom. Although Parent started with the textile workers, eventually the entire trade union movement in Canada was affected by her leadership, during the difficult times of the Cold War. Parent also led the fight for "equal pay for work of equal value" and enlisted feminist support for native women's rights and immigrant women's rights.

Born in 1917, with few role models, today she is a role model for us all. This collection traces the rise of Parent's social conscience as a university student in 1930s Quebec, her work on behalf of strikers in Quebec textile strikes in the 1940s and 1950s, her union organizing in Ontario in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s where she insisted on Canadian Nationalism in Canadian unions. Lynne Kaye and Lynn MacDonald tell the story of Parent's important role in setting the agenda of the Canadian Women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s by stressing economic issues facing working women. From her policy contributions, came the concept of "pay equity." Parent championed immigrant women's rights as well as Native women's rights.

Rick Salutin's contribution, "An Iron Will and a String of Pearls," captures the political importance of the radical lady, Madeleine Parent, who believes in the fundamental human right of respect for each